

The Occidental Hotel  
1411 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. DC-325

HABS,  
DC,  
WASH,  
243-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. DC-325

## THE OCCIDENTAL HOTEL

Location: 1411 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Lot 27, Square 225, Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation  
425 13th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Present Occupant  
and Use: Vacant

Significance: The Occidental Hotel is an example of the architectural eclecticism that prevailed at the turn of the century as designers sought to reconcile advances in high rise technology with stylistic tradition. Its distinctive mansard roof echoing the adjacent Willard Hotel; (DC-293) ornate balconies, and elaborate rustication combine with the more modern window treatment in the articulated facade, which is well scaled to its setting.

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243-PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1903; permit #399, 9/3/03.
2. Architects: Hill and Kendal.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Lot 27 was owned by Henry K. Willard at the time of Occidental's construction and was maintained in the H.K. Willard estate until February of 1978; when ownership was transferred to Oliver T. Carr, Jr., of Washington, D.C. Subsequent purchase by PADC followed later in 1979.
4. Tenant Information: Originally, the Occidental Hotel was a hotel/apartment house, and remained in such use until 1912 when H.K. Willard signed a twenty-year lease for the main floor of the hotel to Gustav E. Buccholz. Buccholz simultaneously leased the lower two floors of the Owen House (Occidental Restaurant) (DC-382) in 1914 for eighteen years. From 1914 on, these two leased spaces functioned as one establishment until taken over in a single lease by the Occidental Catering Company in 1947. The upper floors of the hotel were leased as office space in 1948 to a variety of tenants including lawyers, a notary public, the Willard Estate, and a tour guide office.
5. Original plans and construction: There are no available original plans for the Occidental Hotel.

6. Alterations and additions: The ground floor of the Occidental Hotel, now partially boarded over, contains a central entrance beneath a shallow metal marquee framed by cast iron columns. The marquee was originally the roof of a projecting show window which was flanked by entrances. This arrangement was changed to its present configuration in 1912, (permit #574, 8/3/12).

C. Bibliography:

a. Primary sources:

District of Columbia Building Permits. National Archives,  
Washington, D.C.

District of Columbia Deed Records. Recorder of Deeds,  
Washington, D.C.

District of Columbia Tax and Assessment Records, 1850-1879.  
National Archives, Washington, D.C.

b. Secondary sources:

All of the following are available at the Washingtoniana Division  
of the Martin Luther King, District of Columbia Public Library.

Baist Real Estate Atlas Collection.

District of Columbia City Directories, 1865-1979.

District of Columbia General Assessment Records.

Prepared by: Anderson, Notter/Mariani  
Historic Preservation  
Consultants for PADC

Wendy Hunter  
Architect for PADC  
December 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Occidental Hotel is an eight-story building combining elements of Beaux-Arts Classicism, Renaissance Revival, and the Second Empire Styles. A curved mansard roof caps the facade of the two-bay wide rectangular structure. The ornate terra-cotta and brick facade displays both strong vertical and horizontal elements in a synthesis of classically inspired details and modern skyscraper aesthetics.

2. Condition of fabric:

- a. Exterior walls: The facade and all other exterior walls are in good repair.
- b. Interior: The interior features of the Occidental suffer from neglect. A fire in the attic area has left wood structural members and walls charred.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Occidental Hotel occupies a rectangular site 73' deep and 26' fronting on Pennsylvania Avenue. It is eight stories and approximately 100' tall to the top of the mansard roof, and is two bays wide.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of concrete and iron.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The facade of the Occidental, displays an eclectic assemblage of Beaux-Arts Classical, Renaissance and Second Empire motifs. This stylistic combination is articulated to produce a richly layered facade.

The facade is characterized by elaborate rustication. The lower two floors are terra-cotta clad, while the upper six stories are of brick. The pattern of fenestration, reminiscent of the then-emerging style of vertically thrusting skyscraper design reinforces the verticality of the facade.

The traditional arrangement of the facade into a base, shaft and capital is obfuscated by a series of balconies, with various sizes, shapes and projections, which add several additional horizontal subdivisions to the wall surface. At the second through the sixth floors the window surrounds are visually overlapped by alternating courses of rustication which reinforce the latered appearance of the facade. The windows on the uppermost floor continue past the level of the pilaster capitals and terminate with denticulated and consoled pediments. These pediments are set off against a convex tiled mansard roof with a central rounded dormer containing a bull's-eye window.

The east elevation of the Occidental is a blank brick wall; the west adjoins the Willard Hotel. The north elevation is flush brick with simple window openings.

4. Structural system, framing: The floor structure consists of metal beams with clay infill topped with a lightweight concrete slab. The mansard attic level is also metal framed. Walls are of brick and iron.

5. Balconies: The vertical progression of the facade is modulated by a series of balconies which occur at the second, third, fourth and seventh floors. Those at the second and seventh floors consist of full-width projections with consoles at each end, the latter one is both denticulated and modillioned. The third floor contains two small curved balconies, each with a central supporting console. Those at the fourth floor are rectangular with end brackets. The remaining floors contain shallow balconies within the recesses between pilasters. Each balcony includes an ornate metal railing, except for the single one at the seventh floor.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The three exterior doors on the facade are of glass and steel with transoms.
  - b. Windows: At the fourth through eighth floors both windows and spandrels are recessed. On the second, third and fourth floors, windows are vertical casement; the remainder are double hung sash with plain trim.
7. Roof: The mansard roof of the Occidental Hotel is metal framed with tile covering and carries a bulls-eye dormer window.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Partitioned spaces on each floor are on the west and north of the building. An elevator, with a cage enclosure is located just inside the vestibule. A three-sided lightwell, open on the west, lights the interior rooms above the fifth floor. Corner fireplaces with ornate mantels are located in the inner rooms. The Occidental Restaurant is accessible from the lobby.
2. Stairway: A narrow stair hall with a straight run stair, occurring along the east wall, serves the spaces on each floor. A wood railing rests on elaborate metal ornamentation below. Stairs are of marble and feature a full turn at the wide, lowest landing.
3. Flooring: The vestibule and hall spaces are tiled, with individual rooms carpeted. Original office floors are tongue-in-groove wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The front room on the second floor holds wood panels on all walls with plaster above and plaster molding at the ceiling line. Other rooms have plaster walls and ceilings. The vestibule ceiling molding is denticulated with a plaster molding for center lightpiece.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Interior doors are of wood and glass with brass knobs and locks.

Windows: Windows feature simple molded trim.

6. Decorative features: The corner fireplace mantels are of a varnished wood (now painted). Two columns flank the openings with Corinthian capitals and molded bases. Above the fireplace openings are mantel shelves supported by two small consoles. Large rectangular mirrors are atop the shelves.
7. Elevator: The one elevator along the east wall of the building is enclosed in an ornate metal cage. The cab itself has a covered ceiling and tile floor.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: When the Occidental Hotel was just built, it was flanked on the east by the new Willard Hotel and on the west by the Owen House, a five-story hotel and restaurant. The remainder of the block was lined with medium sized commercial buildings. The south side of Pennsylvania Avenue held larger four and five story buildings before the Commerce Building was built in 1932 (the first of the Federal Building). The Occidental Hotel stands dwarfed by the adjacent Willard Hotel and uncomplemented on the west by a parking garage. Also in Square 225 are the Washington Hotel (northwest of the Occidental Hotel), and the Occidental Restaurant (adjacent to Hotel). South of the Hotel is the new Pershing Park, currently under construction.

Prepared by: Anderson, Notter/Mariani  
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the completion of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Plan. John A. Burns, AIA, and Emily J. Harris were the HABS project coordinators. The records were prepared under the general supervision of Jeffrey S. Wolf, Architect with PADC. Historic data was compiled by PADC consultants in historic preservation, Anderson Notter/Mariani, and expanded by Wendy Hunter, Architect with PADC. Photographs were taken by Jeffrey S. Wolf in December 1979. The data was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Robert S. Lange, an architectural historian in the HABS office, in June 1980.